

# Cultural Property Agreements



## CULTURAL PROPERTY ADVISORY COMMITTEE

**The Cultural Property Advisory Committee advises the Department on appropriate U.S. action in response to requests from foreign governments for cultural property agreements. The Presidentially-appointed members of the Committee include private-sector experts in archaeology, anthropology, ethnology, and related fields; experts in the international sale of cultural property; representatives of museums; and the general public. The Committee submits its findings and recommendations directly to the Department of State.**

As a State Party to the 1970 UNESCO Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property, the United States strives to protect and preserve cultural property from threats of pillage and trafficking. The Convention on Cultural Property Implementation Act (CPIA), 19 U.S.C. §§ 2601-2613, implements the United States' obligations under the 1970 UNESCO Convention, either through emergency actions or bilateral cultural property agreements. In collaboration with partner countries, certain categories of cultural property are designated by the U.S. government as important to archaeology, prehistory, history, literature, art, or science. These include archaeological objects (e.g., antiquities, historical monuments) and ethnological objects (e.g., rare manuscripts, items used in rituals).

U.S. efforts to protect and preserve cultural heritage through cultural property agreements promote stability, economic development, and good governance in other countries, while denying critical financing to terrorist organizations and other criminal networks that engage in illicit trade.

In essence, cultural property agreements are tools for preventing illicit activity. In some countries, it is unlawful to excavate, remove, or export cultural objects without a permit. Once a bilateral agreement is in place and corresponding import restrictions have been imposed, importation of designated objects into the United States is prohibited except under limited circumstances. The goal of such an agreement is to protect cultural heritage by reducing the incentive for further pillage of archaeological and ethnological material.

Cultural property agreements are in force with Belize, Bolivia, Bulgaria, Cambodia, China, Colombia, Cyprus, Egypt, El Salvador, Greece, Guatemala, Honduras, Italy, Libya, Mali, Nicaragua, and Peru. Emergency import restrictions have been imposed on archaeological and ethnological materials from Iraq and Syria.

The government of any State Party to the 1970 UNESCO Convention may request a cultural property agreement by submitting a written request to the Department of State. Much of the authority of the President under the CPIA has been conveyed to the Secretary of State, and now also rests with certain senior officials at the Department pursuant to delegations of authority. The Bureau for Educational and Cultural Affairs carries out the Department's responsibilities under CPIA.



**Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs**  
**U.S. Department of State**

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